

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 L-03 NSC-05
PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 IO-14 /097 W
-----105357 211034Z /13-11

P R 211015Z FEB 78
FM AMCONSUL DURBAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2838
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

UNCLAS DURBAN 0113

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

EO 11652: NA
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, SF
SUBJ: BLACKS STRIKE IN KWAZULU INDUSTRIAL TOWNSHIP

REF: 77 DURBAN A-75

1. FEBRUARY 21 NATAL PRESS REPORTED THAT GROUP OF APPROXIMATELY HALF OF 1700 WORKERS FROM KWAZULU INDUSTRIAL TOWNSHIP ISITHEBE HAD GONE ON STRIKE AND STONED POLICE AND VEHICLES, CAUSING VIRTUAL CLOSURE OF TOWNSHIP'S 28 FACTORIES. ACCORDING TO REPORT, TROUBLE BEGAN WHEN SMALL GROUP OF WORKERS STOPPED CARS AND BUSES ENTERING TOWNSHIP AND URGED WORKERS TO STRIKE BECAUSE OF LOW WAGES AND EMPLOYMENT OF INDIANS IN MANAGERIAL POSITIONS. GROWING CROWD THEN BECAME RIOTOUS AND STONED PASSING VEHICLES. DURING DEMONSTRATION LOCAL MAGISTRATE MET STRIKERS' DELEGATION AND AGREED TO DISCUSS GRIEVANCES WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF KWAZULU GOVERNMENT AND SAG DEPARTMENT OF PLURAL RELATIONS AT ULUNDI TODAY. HOWEVER SOME WORKERS REFUSED TO DISPERSE AFTER AGREEMENT ANNOUNCED, AND POLICE WERE CALLED IN. TWO POLICEMEN WERE INJURED DURING SUBSEQUENT TEAR GAS FORAY WHICH FINALLY DISPERSED CROWD. POLICE
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ANNOUNCED THEY WOULD PROTECT WORKERS WHO WISHED TO RETURN TO WORK TODAY.

2. COMMENT: INCIDENT IS FIRST OF ANY PROPORTION IN NATAL/KAWZULU SINCE THE BUS DRIVERS' STRIKE OF 1976. IT IS UNCLEAR AT THIS POINT WHETHER IT BE THE BEGINNING OF FURTHER LABOR DISPUTES IN NATAL. HOWEVER IT DOES CONTRADICT EARLIER PREDICTIONS BY

A NUMBER OF ISITHEBE FIRMS THAT LABOR UNREST WAS UNLIKELY THERE
BECAUSE HOMELANDS WORKERS WERE RELATIVELY UNSOPHISTICATED AND
FEARFUL OF BEING FIRED SINCE THERE WERE SO MANY OTHERS WILLING
TO REPLACE THEM (REFAIR). IN ADDITION, AT LEAST TWO OF THE
FIRMS IN ISITHEBE HAD RELEASED NEARLY ALL THEIR BLACK EMPLOYEES
BEFORE MOVING THERE FORM THE REEF, AT LEAST IN PART TO AVOID
"CONTAMINATION" OF RURAL BLACKS WITH CONSCIOUSNESS OF URBAN
BLACK WORKERS.
FARBER

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NNN

Message Attributes

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